Pergamon

BOOK REVIEWS

Accounting for Transsexualism and Transhomosexuality, *by* *Bryan Tully.* Whiting & Birch Ltd, London, 1992, 292 pp. $65.00 (clothbound).

In this book Bryan Tully, a chartered psychologist, traces the careers of over 200 'gender distressed' people who presented themselves at London's Gender Identity Clinic at Charing Cross Hospital. Rather than taking a narrow psychiatric approach to gender dysphoria, Tully elects to use a career perspective in tracing the evolution of his respondents' gender identity.

Tully uses the ethnogenic approach to data collection, that is he allows his respondents to be 'authorities on themselves' and account for their own behaviors. The individuals who come to the Gender Identity Clinic present often confused histories of homosexuality, transvestism and cross-dressing, heterosexuality, and feelings about 'being in the wrong body'. All the interviewees fell into the following cohorts: new beginners, already attending, post-reassignment surgery, special cases, and transhomosexuals (individuals who are attracted to homosexual persons of the opposite sex).

Most of the book consists of quotations from the respondents which illustrate various stages in their gender careers, including childhood experiences, problems in marriage, adult personality problems, and dissociative experiences. It is clear from this research that the path of gender dysphoria and the diagnosis of transsexualism are different for men and women. Most of the male patients experienced either physical or emotional problems in childhood which made them feel that they had failed as men. Some were physically handicapped while others were fearful or uninterested in typically male activities; thus, they came to believe that they were failed males. They later came to see that perhaps they were not really males at all but females. These men have a 'spoiled sense of gendered self'; so transgenderisation becomes a strategy for healing.

Most of the women patients had been tomboys as girls and experiences few problems until they reached adolescence. On reaching puberty parents, schools and the mass media all combined to push the girls toward gender conformity. They should focus on grooming, clothing, and attracting boys. These young girls come to hate anything

associated with the feminine and view transsexualism as a way of restoring themselves.

The evidence that Tully offers is convincing. In Western societies, as well as most of the world, the male gender role is more rigidly and narrowly defined than the female, and the penalties for failing as a male are greater than for the female. Many societies have created alternative genders for men and women who, for whatever reasons, are unable to succeed at the roles prescribed by the society. For example, some anthropologists have argued that berdache among the Plains Indians was an alternative for males who did not want to play the warrior role.

Again in western societies emphasis is placed on young girls grooming themselves for marriage and motherhood; it is no wonder that recent studies in the United States have shown the girls' self esteem drops when they enter high-school. Many girls resent the loss of freedom and spontaneity which adolescence entails. They don't want to grow up to become wives and mothers but, rather wish to be 'one of the boys'.

If Tully is on the right track, then the next step is to develop a model which will predict why some individuals come to see transsexualism as a solution to their dissatisfaction and unhappiness. The adoption of a new gender identity and all that entails, including reconstructive surgery, is a dramatic and fateful step. As Tully makes clear, transsexuals exhibit unusual tenacity in their efforts to change genders, obtain hormonal therapy and reconstructive surgery. Tully suggests that gender schema theory may help in understanding the processes by which individuals come to identify themselves as transsexuals.

This is a hard book to read; the stories are so wrenching, so heartbreaking. Why are some people burdened with lifelong unhappiness? I'm afraid I don't have the answer to that one.

There are a few problems with the bibliography, but over-all the book is well-researched and the literature review more than adequate.

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Psychology on the Streets: Mental Health Practice with Homeless Persons, *by Thomas L. Kuhlman.* John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1994, 223 pp. £28.95.

Homelessness has been one of the most important topics in the mental health literature of the past decade. This book gives a useful insight into this subject from an unusual angle. It uses a psychodynamic language to describe the process and outcome of author's psychotherapeutic work with homeless individuals. This direct experience was used to illustrate and understand the impact of homelessness and the issues involved in working with them.

The first chapter adopts a developmental approach to homelessness. It explores the stages and psychological consequences for a person to be homeless and describes the dynamics of working with such a person for mental health professionals. This chapter uses a combination of American

literature on the subject and author's own experience to argue its case. It avoids academic definitions of the homeless and uses "an ecological perspective (that) permits a culture to define itself" (p. 9). Chapter two is a review of literature on the new homelessness highlighting the differences from the old Skid Row homelessness. Mental health problems of the homeless are often construed as a product of de-institutionalisation of the chronic mentally ill. This chapter makes the point that these problems could be the result of social genesis (resulting from poverty and homelessness). The scope of these two chapters could have been widened if the author did not restrict himself to American literature on the subject. Chapter three titled 'Resistance' explores the lack of insight of homeless psychotics and the difficulty in engaging them in therapy. This chapter explains this resistance in the context of past experiences, current life style and the life-long beliefs of this population. Chapter four deals

with the other face of the coin 'Countertransference' which is the psychodynamic term for the resistance and negative feeling that rise in mental health professionals while working with homeless individuals. In spite of the real stresses and dangers involved in such work, the author suggests ways of using practitioner's personal and team resources to overcome this resistance.

Chapter five describes the street face of schizophrenia which may not fit easily with a psychiatry textbook description of the disorder. The management of this disorder in the homeless should incorporate dealing with their psychosocial circumstances, of which housing is an important component. Chapter six expands on this issue by explaining legislation related to benefits entitlements (Supplementary Security Income) in the U.S.A., and the mechanism of documenting and registering clients' disability to help them obtain their entitlements. The next two chapters investigate therapeutic interventions used to help these individuals. Chapter seven explores single session interventions in which therapeutic aims could be set and started without establishing a formal therapeutic alliance. Chapter eight explores semi-structured intermittent therapy. In this context supportive and other forms of therapeutic techniques could be used to help these clients. As to the effectiveness of such therapy the author suggests "change process . . . occur more frequently than their absence in the professional literature would suggest" (p. 175).

Chapter nine describes the complexity of the psychological problems of homeless people. They usually present with a multitude of problems which require a multi-disciplinary intervention. Chapter ten reports the positive outcome of therapeutic interventions in a majority of these people in spite of their complicated problems. The author stresses the importance of housing as a component of any intervention, especially as homelessness "is more correlated in time with disappearance of affordable housing stock than with the onset of deinstitutionalisation" (Kiesler, 1991).

This book is a useful practical resource to all those who work with homeless people. It is also valuable to those who want to conduct research on the mental health needs of this population.

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Kiesler C. A., Homelessness and public policy priorities. *Am. Psychologist* **46**, 1245, 1991.

New Motherhood: Cultural and Personal Transitions in the 1980s, by *Maria Crouch and Lenore Manderson.* Gordon and Breach Science, Yverdon, Switzerland, 1993, 214 pp. U.S. $45.00 (hardback).

Sociologists Crouch and Manderson present results of research conducted between 1982 and 1987 in Australia with 93 predominantly middle-class, white, first time mothers for the purpose of defining concepts and propositions related to the childbearing experience and its cultural and social significance. The research approach includes multiple serial interviews and observation of childbirth education classes, labour, and mothers' meetings to elicit the "elusive nature of emotional response" and identify the "major themes of women's experiences" with conception, pregnancy, labour and delivery, and the first few months of mothering in essentially healthy women and low risk pregnancies. The book, organized into four parts, dovetails their research findings into an insightful discussion demonstrating the dynamic evolution of cultural practices of reproduction and women's transition to parenthood which occurred during the 1980's in industrial nations. These practices include the re-embracing of pregnancy and birth by women with attention shifting to the experience of having a baby rather than creating a family. Provocative discussions pulling from issues in medicine and the social sciences contribute and support the general premise that the relationship a woman perceives between her childbearing experience and her self identity has replaced marriage as the most significant 'rite of passage' for industrial women today. Supporters of any specific theoretical regime from the social sciences or medicine in working with pregnant families will be disappointed in this book, because the theoretical constructs and assumptions and, therefore, recommendations for interventions are from a qualitative position. There is little new information here, but the organization and presentation make the book a valuable one. The audience could be discouraged from paying attention to this timely resource due to the title emphasizing the 1980s, which comes across as possibly presenting outmoded information.

The multifaceted pattern of evolving motherhood, considering the expectations of the experience versus the reality in these women's lives is identified, followed, and described in practical and realistic terms throughout the book. The subjects' hopes, wants, needs, anxieties and fears are positioned alongside their experiences and are portrayed within the context of the impact of consumerism and commercialism. These influence decision making, requests of health professionals, and expectations of performance of self and others throughout the prenatal and postnatal time period. The ultimate influence and outcome on these mothers shows that common sense often reigns supreme. How they get there, and the insights as presented by the authors in rich detail makes this a useful resource to most health professionals working with pregnant families.

Part I includes initial conceptions and the expected description of the study methods, limits and limitations. The historical perspectives is presented in the evolving primacy elements of childbearing of the 1950's through the 70's. These are overlaid with birthing elements of the 1980's including reproduction and infertility option development, society's response to illegitimacy, medical pressures to control and conform, offset with the consumer demand for change including father attended delivery, midwifery options of service and/or home delivery, 'elder' primipara re-definition, and career versus family decision-making in framing the evolving self image of the mother-to-be.

Part II focuses around the birthing event itself and a more in-depth description of the social, cultural and personal transitions experienced in attaining motherhood. Anthropology tracking of cultural assumptions as it occurred through the years detail the cultural impact on having children. The lessening hazards of childbearing, increased access to childbirth education resources, infertility options, advances in pain management, differences in the approach to labour and delivery as related to fetal versus maternal emphasis or interest by the practitioner, evolving consumer discontent with the 'medical model' of birth, increased numbers of women experiencing natural childbirth, the ticking clock phenomenon, just to name a few factors, all contributed to the 1980's (which continues into the present) being a dynamic decade of change. Birth meaning to the mother is detailed.

Part III focuses on the antepartum and postpartum time periods with some repeat and expanded discussion of